

Assessing the Housing Need in the Latino Community

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Research Methodology.....	2
Latino Population Profile: Minnesota.....	4
Numbers of Hispanics/Latinos	
Countries of Origin	
Geographic Locations/Areas of Concentration	
Average Age	
Language Proficiency	
Education	
Primary Occupations	
Homeownership Rate	
Purchasing Power	
The Community	
Community Voices: Assessing the Housing Need in the Latino Community.....	7
- <i>Housing Needs and Challenges in the Latino Community.....</i>	<i>7</i>
Financial Education	
Foreclosure Prevention	
Affordable Housing	
Rental Housing	
- <i>What is the best way to reach the Latino Population?.....</i>	<i>9</i>
Word of Mouth	
Developing Relationships	
Being Present in the Community	
In-Language Marketing	
- <i>Is NeDA seen as a Latino Housing Organization?.....</i>	<i>12</i>
- <i>NeDA's role according to Community Members.....</i>	<i>13</i>
Appendices.....	16

Introduction

Neighborhood Development Alliance was founded in 1989. Its mission is to strengthen the vitality of lower income neighborhoods within the city of St. Paul by creating and preserving housing and business opportunities for residents of all income levels. In the beginning, NeDA focused on developing and renovating housing and assisting homeowners with home repair projects on the West Side of St. Paul. Over time NeDA became a Latino-oriented organization in order to serve the Twin Cities Latino population. This came about through NeDA's development of a bilingual staff and a request, particularly from the State of Minnesota's Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) to broaden our services beyond the West Side boundaries. In addition to development projects on the West Side, NeDA now offers Homebuyer Education and Financial Literacy Workshops as well as one-to-one counseling, foreclosure prevention counseling, and homeowner rehab programs throughout the Twin Cities seven county metro area. Broadly defined, these services reach out to low to moderate income households. More specifically, NeDA's bilingual staff focuses its resources in serving the growing Latino community. As the Latino population in Minnesota and the Twin Cities Metro area continues to increase and expand geographically, NeDA seeks to assess current unmet needs and future challenges. The purpose of this project is to assess the past and future trends of the Latino population in Minnesota to help NeDA move strategically forward in serving the Latino community's housing and financial education needs.

Research Methodology

During the initial phase of this research, analysis of existing databases was performed in order to provide a demographic overview of the current Latino population in Minnesota as well as an assessment of where this population is going in the next ten years. From this information, a profile was created for the Latino Population in Minnesota with a specific focus on the Twin Cities 7-county metro area. The profile answers the question "What do we already know about the Latino population in Minnesota and what do existing population projections look like?" before any primary source data collection took place. The profile presents demographic information about the Latino Population in Minnesota based on 2000 Census data, as well as information from the State of Minnesota website, the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, CURA, the Metropolitan Council, and research completed by the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency.

Between June 2007 and August 2007, I, a student intern at NeDA, met with organizations and leaders in the Latino community to gather further information through key-informant interviews and focus groups on the housing related needs and future challenges of the Latino population in order to expand on and fill in the gaps of the available demographic information.

- **Key Informant Interviews**

For the purposes of this research key-informants are staff of both profit and non-profit organizations and community leaders who work with or are

connected to the Latino population in Minnesota. NeDA recruited a wide range of key-informants who could speak to the demographic trends and needs of the Latino population in Minnesota including social and community program staff, lenders, and realtors. Fourteen people participated in the interviews. They were associated with the following organizations:

- Casa de Esperanza
- Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA)
- Latino Economic Development Corp (LEDC)
- Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services (DBNHS)
- East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC)
- Home Ownership Center
- Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency
- West Side Citizens Organization
- Burnet Realty
- Homestead Mortgage
- Mortgages Unlimited
- Wells Fargo
- La Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús
- BCB Construction

Key-informant interviews were conducted in English or Spanish. The majority of interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed. Some interviewees were uncomfortable being recorded and in these cases copious notes were taken during the interview. Both transcripts and notes were used for analysis. All interviews were conducted in adherence to the policy of confidentiality and thus no specifics regarding the identity of interviewees are revealed in this report and interviewees are described using general demographic information.

- **Focus Groups**

One focus group was conducted with 12 people who participated in either the Home Stretch or Financial Literacy workshops offered by NeDA. The focus group ran an hour and a half and copious notes were taken on participant responses to the questions.

Latino Population Profile: Minnesota

Demographic Trends

Numbers of Hispanics/Latinos

According to U.S. Census data the number of Hispanic/Latino people in Minnesota grew to 143,382 by the year 2000. While Minnesota's total population grew approximately 12 percent from 1990 to 2000, the Latino population grew almost 168 percent. In addition, every year approximately 15,000 migrant workers travel to Minnesota to work in different industries across the state. In 2006, there were close to 200,000 Latinos in Minnesota, about 3.8 percent of the total population (Figure 1). This number is expected to increase to almost 300,000 by the year 2025 (Figure 2).

Countries of Origin

Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey in 2005, nearly three in four Latino's in Minnesota are from Mexican origin (Figure 3). One third of Minnesota's Latino population is born in Minnesota (Figure 4). According to the people I interviewed, the majority of people they see are from Mexico, but there is also a smaller percentage from Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, and Central America: "But mostly people are from Mexico, I wouldn't say there's been much of a change in that over the last ten years." According to one interviewee, the second largest Latino population in Minnesota is from Ecuador: "They are mainly concentrated in Northeast Minneapolis and they are mostly Cuenqueños from the Cuenca, they are very hard working and entrepreneurial, and they will do anything to bring their families here."

Geographic Locations or Areas of Concentrations

73 % of Latinos who live in Minnesota reside in Minneapolis/St. Paul or the surrounding suburbs (Figure 5). According to a study done by the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency the Latino population is geographically concentrated in Southern Minnesota (Figure 6 and 7). According to the 2000 Census, the top ten Minnesota cities with the largest Chicano/Latino population are: Minneapolis, St. Paul, Willmar, Rochester, Bloomington, Worthington, Richfield, Brooklyn Park, West St. Paul, and Faribault.

People working closely with the Latino population have watched the population not only grow in numbers but spread geographically as well: "In 1989 and the Latino community was much smaller than it is today, it was much more restrictive to certain areas of the Twin Cities like the West Side of St. Paul or South Minneapolis, you know over the years the population has exploded tremendously and obviously nobody fits in the same basket as everybody, there are people who live out in the suburbs, you know greater Minnesota and all over the Twin Cities area."

Another interviewee commented on the changing shape of the Latino population: "I worked for Whittier Community Development Corporation for over 15 years and in the 1990 Census only 2 % of the Whittier neighborhood was Latino, by 2000 it was over 20

%, this was perceived to be the first neighborhood in Minneapolis to have a significant Latino population. Before 2000 the wide perception was that Latinos in the Twin Cities lived mostly on the West Side. Currently there is no area in the city that is *the* Latino area; there is a significant Latino population that has spread throughout much of the Twin Cities area. It continues to spread.”

Others have seen a growth on the East Side of St. Paul, commenting that there is a large number of Latinos now on the East Side, even more than on the West Side, but they are more isolated from each other, there is less of a network within the community.

“Here in the cities, I think one of the big overlooked areas is northern Dakota County and by that I mean the Burnsville, Eagan area. I would say when people tend to think of the Latino community they think West Side, you know, I think that is an old view of things, I think if you were to look at whose buying homes now, especially in the home buying communities, in South St. Paul, West St. Paul, even Inver Grove Heights, and especially in the Eagan area, Latinos are huge chunks of who is actually buying houses now. You can go up and down the streets in South St. Paul and there are entire sections that are now mostly Latino neighborhoods. There are entire pockets in Eagan where entire apartment complexes are all Latinos. I think most people think that they will just go to Minneapolis and St. Paul for services, where, they are starting to identify themselves as separate pockets, separate from Minneapolis and St. Paul. In greater Minnesota they will always follow manufacturing job pockets, whether that is agricultural jobs or manufacturing, so there will always be specific pockets of where those communities are growing. Shakopee is one area that I keep hearing is growing by leaps and bounds but that is just hear-say I don’t have any specific knowledge on that, but the St. Cloud area I know is growing, the Wilmer area is growing, but I am sure you have seen the actual statistics. Specifically how that affects NeDA, I would say the kind of changing the focus from this traditional West Side area to a little bit more expanded northern Dakota County, Southern Washington County areas, because they are growing by leaps and bounds.”

Average Age

According to one community member: “The Latino population here is a very young population—the majority of which is in their 20’s and 30’s and they are having children so their housing needs will be for three, four, five bedroom houses, because in our culture we live together.” In 2000, almost 39 percent of Minnesota’s Latino population was under the age of 18 (Figure 8). This rate is 13 percentage points higher than the rate of all Minnesotans under the age of 18. Births to mothers born outside the U.S. continue to increase, according to the Minnesota Department of health. In Minnesota 13.7% of babies were born to foreign born mothers and births to mothers born in Mexico went from 0.3% in 1990 to 3.8% in 2001. Overall, there has been a huge increase in second-generation Mexicans: “They get married so young and have children and their children already are starting to get married and have children.”

Language Proficiency

Based on data from the Minnesota Department of Education for the 2002-2003 academic years, there were a total of 73,620 students who do not speak English at home. According to a study done by the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, in Minneapolis and St. Paul there are between 1,180 and 4,980 schoolchildren who speak Spanish at home. In the six surrounding suburbs of Anoka-Hennepin, Oseo, Robbinsdale, Richfield, Bloomington, and Rosemount-Apple Valley between 620 and 900 schoolchildren speak Spanish at home. Chaska, Shakopee, Burnsville, Mendota Heights and Colombia Heights also have a relatively high concentration of students who speak Spanish at home. However, according to a study done by the Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, three in four Latinos speak English well (Figure 9).

Education

In 2000, almost 42 percent of Hispanic/Latino people over the age of 25 in Minnesota did not have a high school diploma or equivalency. This rate was almost four times that of the White/not Hispanic population. While this percentage was lower for the Minneapolis and St. Paul metro area, access to equal education, especially secondary education, is an imperative. Latinos living in Minnesota are often made to pay out-of-state tuition to state universities, putting them at a disadvantage.

Primary Occupations

According to census data, the most common occupations for Latinos in Minnesota are: cooks, janitors and building cleaners, laborers, material movers, production workers, cooling and freezing equipment operators, packaging and filling machine operators, as well as tenders, cashiers, butchers and other meat, poultry, and fish processing, maids and cleaners, retail salespersons, and agricultural workers.

The feeling among people I interviewed was that people who are working are doing a little better now than they had been in the past: "So I think the standard of living has increased over the past few years which means that there might be more disposable income and hopefully means not as many difficulties in the family." The Latino community has had success through incubation, points out one interviewee, starting small and growing from that, organizing from the inside out: "Using our entrepreneurial strength to move the agenda of the Latino community forward. Because it is not about being consumers, it is about being producers of change."

Income Levels

Based on the American Country Survey, the State Demographic Center indicates that the median household income for Latinos was \$35,492, compared to white and Asian households which earned a median income of \$53,792 and \$53,916 respectively. One person I interviewed commented: "The income is low, people need to learn about how money works here because it is the young people, who are making only 8, 10, and 15 dollars an hour will be the next homeowners" (Figure 10).

Homeownership Rate

Some of the people I interviewed felt that homeownership among the Latino community has risen over the last decade: “A significantly higher percentage of people coming to us are home owners now than was the case ten years ago. A lot more Latinos own property now than when we started working with Latinos ten years ago” and Latino clients are eager to become homeowners.

However some people are more skeptical. One of the people whom I interviewed, an independent contractor, is unsure that single family homes will continue to be affordable in the future. Figures show that homeownership has risen in the past few years but only slightly, and is still only around the fifty percent level which is much lower than that of whites in Minnesota (Figure 11).

Purchasing Power

According to a study done by Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency, the median income for Latinos is around \$35,000 throughout the state of Minnesota and slightly higher, \$37,000 in the Twin Cities metro area. Even with a forty-year loan their purchasing power is still only just over \$125,000 which is often still lower than the affordable housing available (Figure 12).

The Community

What is important in the Latino community is that they stop being seen as foreigners: “If they can live, work, go to school here, the level of the area will increase, become a center, a good place to live, a strong community.” People who have been here a few years have started families so the family dynamic has changed as one interviewee explains: “When we began in 1992 a lot of people were young men looking for work. Eventually families started coming here and the community became a family oriented one. That sort of put the community in a different trajectory oriented towards stabilization.”

Community Voices: Assessing the Housing Need in the Latino Community

Housing needs and challenges in the Latino Community

Financial Education

Decidedly one of the primary housing needs that extends not only to the Latino Population but across all populations is financial education: “Financial Literacy has grown and is to me needed more than ever because people are suffering now, in crisis, foreclosure, their money is gone, they have no idea how they are going to make a living, they need someone to bring them back—learning how to budget, learning how to repair a credit, learning the whole thing again on how to develop into the American society of credit.” People need to have access to the information they need in order not to be taken

advantage of: “As far as homeownership, Latinos are highly motivated to buy properties, but I suspect many are being taken advantage of.”

Not understanding the U.S. banking and credit system and what acceptable financial agreements are, many Latinos frequently find themselves in predatory situations where they are, for instance, paying outrageous interest rates such as 10% per month on a loan, which is 120% per year, and in most cases they are unable to pay the loans off. Financial Literacy and Homestretch workshops, such as the ones offered by NeDA, are a much needed response to the growing fraud regarding financial and housing issues. Although Latino clientele are more educated than before and have the desire to become even more aware of the nuances of the financial system in the U.S., there is a need for greater transparency of financial education courses so education can happen before people get into trouble or reach a crisis.

However, according to the majority of the people interviewed, financial education needs to start earlier, targeting the younger generation through the school systems and producing a trickle down effect on the parents. Specifically in terms of pre-homebuyer education: “We have to shift the message and shift the community mindset in the context of it doesn’t matter who you are or how much education or how prepared or ready, if you own a home, you need this, period, its not—you own a home and you’re in trouble or this happened—if you own a home this is something you should do, this is important.”

Specifically targeting the Latino population, financial education classes need to be offered in Spanish, in accessible places, and during a time when people can attend: “It needs to have the culturally sensitive angle that it never had, and it is only certain organizations that have been able to incorporate some of the culturally sensitive needs that Homestretch has.” According to past participants in NeDA workshops, transportation and lack of childcare have also been inhibitors to attending the workshops. Both the desire and the need for financial education are prevalent among Latinos in Minnesota, but the knowledge that these kinds of services exist needs to be increased.

Foreclosure Prevention

“With the Latino clients that we are seeing, at this point we are seeing far more foreclosure prevention calls than we are pre-purchase calls, of those calls that we are getting for foreclosure prevention, the situation comes down to information and education, meaning that clients who are in foreclosure situations now signed documents that they just had no idea what they were.” This is not just a Latino issue but an issue across the board, in the African community, the Hmong community, the Anglo-white Minnesotan community. There is an imminent need to get better information sooner into homebuyers’ hands. The question across the board is how educators like NeDA can reach people before the education piece becomes curative instead of preventative: “Before they’ve picked out the dream house, before they’ve started working with a lender, before they’ve signed with a broker, etc, all of those things—to get them in earlier.” It becomes a question of marketing, which, in the network of non-profits, there is often not the funding to carry out the necessary marketing schemes to get the word out.

It is also going to take a lot of collaborative work amongst organizations and community members to get the message out there and fight against those predatory lenders: “It’s going to take for us to invest more than them so that we can reach people first, that is the reality of how its going to be if we want to see a decline in foreclosures.”

Affordable Housing

According to an independent contractor, the need for affordable housing is in the hundreds of thousands of units. Community members see the cost of housing as increasing even in low income areas, people have to work two jobs just to earn enough money to pay food and rent. In the non-profit housing sector, the cost of single family housing has inflated more rapidly than the individuals they serve can afford. The response has been community land trusts and public or private subsidies, but even then there is a gap between the amount subsidized and what people can afford: “In my opinion whether single family housing can be produced affordably is questionable.” Low income housing is extremely necessary. Right now the average price is around \$220,000 and \$240,000 which is impossible for newcomers who are only making around ten dollars an hour. Often what happens as a result of this is that two or three people go in on a house together, which creates a problem when one of them decides to go back to his or her country and the other two are left with a mortgage they can no longer afford. Consequently, education is only one piece of the puzzle, as one interviewee pointed out, people can have access to education, be informed about the right products available, have a good credit score, but if they are only making ten dollars an hour somewhere, they are priced out of the market.” There is also a gap in multi-unit apartment buildings no one in the Twin Cities is fulfilling, according to one interviewee, and there are people who would benefit from that kind of housing, especially recent immigrants. Perhaps there is also a need to shift the prevalent mentality of instant gratification from “I want it now to its better for me to wait so I have a chance of keeping my home.”

Rental Housing

Aside from affordable housing, quality, multiple unit rental housing is also needed within the Latino community: “I think this is a particular problem for Latinos because such a high percentage are undocumented, this is one of the reasons they are so prone to be taken advantage of, because if they are defrauded they don’t report it because they fear what the consequences might be, this is most true in buying houses or getting loans, it is also true in renting apartments.” The perception is that many landlords prefer to lease to Latinos because they know a high percentage are undocumented and will be less likely to file complaints and can be easily evicted or pressured by threats of reports to immigration.

What is the best way of reaching the Latino Community?

It is important to create marketing techniques that accommodate the emerging populations’ way of living so that awareness of services is equal among all people living in the U.S. today. Latinos, like other emerging populations, come from family oriented

societies that focus on the well-being of the group rather than the individual. Consequently, they often find it difficult to operate under the goal driven U.S. society where efficiency of service is often valued over relationship building. Thus, in considering how to best reach Latino's with services or information, it is important to learn their cultural behavior, how they operate in society, who they call first, where do they go for help. Most Latino's begin internally, with family members or close friends in order to get a referral. Thinking homeownership, they get a referral to a realtor. The realtor then provides the connection to a lender. "So the Latino doesn't get the education he needs, he just learned that his cousin got a house and he did it through this realtor. So you have got to penetrate those direct links." The goal is that organizations like NeDA who provide financial education and homebuyer's assistance is the first referral, the first link.

Word of Mouth

Without a doubt the number one way to reach the Latino community, according to every single person interviewed, is word of mouth. One person with a good word to say about an organization or a particular service is far more beneficial than any TV, radio, or print ads an organization has paid for. Consequently, one thing organizations might do in order to become more transparent within a community is establish a process of working with clients to teach them how to spread the word, really give people the power and ability, the tools to do this.

Just as positive word of mouth can be to the benefit of organizations, negative word of mouth can have the opposite effect. According to one interviewee, one of the biggest issues within the Latino community is what he referred to as "rampant speculation" meaning that "someone will hear something somewhere like half a news story or half a 'someone at work said' and will run with that wildfire story." For example immigration reform is dead right now in Washington: "But so we have seen people come through actually talking about refinancing their homes now so they can get \$5,000 out so they can get their papers fixed when the time comes. And so just stopping that, how to control that rampant misinformation that is out there is really difficult." This speculation is made worse by the fact that there is no one place where people can find reliable information about the issues that concern them: "Services like NeDA's protect not only the client but the realtor agent and the broker as well. Because as they say, if you do something bad everyone will know and that is bad press, bad marketing. The best advertising you can do with the Latino population is word of mouth—provide good services and everybody and their mother will come to you."

Developing Relationships

The next frequent response to the best way to reach the Latino population was making connections with community leaders and being introduced through a trusted source: "Going through trusted organizations where they have contact with people who are in the market gives them a resource that is a reliable resource." The general consensus was that immigrants more than other communities: "Depend on personal relationships and trust

and introductions by people they trust for services they seek. They are afraid to seek services from people or organizations they don't know or they haven't been introduced to by somebody they know and trust. This means that an organization like NeDA is much more effective in making connections." Doing work in immigrant communities depends on personal relationships and building relationships of trust and this must be done in relation to culture and language—allies need to be made within the communities and those allies are key people or organizations, such as churches or community centers within that community network. This way NeDA can serve a niche across the state that organizations in greater Minnesota cannot because they lack the language capabilities to do so.

Keeping contact with clients through newsletters, and keeping them informed about what is happening in the market was also suggested as a way of developing relationships within the Latino community. Also remembering that Latino clients require more time than traditional Minnesotan clients because: "First they want to discuss other things, family, etc, then they can get down to business."

Being Present in the Community

Similarly, being present in the Latino community is effective, going to events, luncheons, and fairs where Latinos are: "I think the biggest thing in reaching the Latino community has been the relationships within the community because I think they look a lot to their community leaders and people who are genuinely interested in who they are." Just playing the advocacy role is important: "Especially for first time homebuyers and people who may not be from here, buying a home is not an easy thing. The word of mouth and grass roots advocacy work is the most valuable." NeDA should promote them like they are, as the advocate and the voice for the community: "Before you buy a home talk to somebody who is looking out for your best interest, and I think that is what they [NeDA] do, but I think that has to become more synonymous with the name NeDA."

In-Language Marketing

Several interviewees commented that: "Good materials, good quality materials" were important: "NeDA has come a long way in its recent materials but there is still room for growth in just the quality of printed materials." Among the participants of the focus group, there was a consensus that NeDA needs to become more transparent within the Latino community: "They need to do more marketing, above all in Spanish." One participant underlined this need: "They need to spread the word about the services they offer, most people I know do not know about NeDA or what type of services they offer." The general feeling among participants is that people in the suburbs are not well informed and are not being taken care of: "In the suburbs there are Adult Basic Education Centers where information could be accessed, there is also the MLC Minnesota Literacy council that would be good places to spread the word in the suburbs," said one participant.

- **Radio**

Radio was referred to by most interviewees as the best media, aside from word of mouth, to reach the Latino community.

- **Television**

Focus group participants commented that: “Now with the radio and the TV more people know about NeDA.” However, several participants (depending on where they lived in the metro area) have had difficulties accessing the channel where NeDA appears and some said that they were only able to access it if they had cable.

- **Print**

Print ads in major newspapers such as *El Periódico* and *Nuestra Gente*, two of the largest Spanish speaking newspapers, was also discussed as a good way to reach the Latino population. These newspapers are available in all of the prime locations, such as Mercado Central, Plaza Latina, restaurants and Latino businesses in the Twin Cities area.

- **Internet**

More and more Latinos are going to the internet to find information: “As the younger generation moves out of high school and into college and looks towards home ownership, the internet will become more and more a way to reach them.”

Considering this, one participant suggested that having a link to NeDA from other organizations websites, such as CLUES or other predominantly Latino organizations would be a good way to spread the word. Likewise, having links to other organizations that provide different services on NeDA’s website would be equally helpful to those searching for services and information online.

Is NeDA viewed as a “Latino Housing Organization”?

Of the people interviewed, answers to this question were evenly split and reasons for each response are quoted or summarized below.

Yes

People who felt that NeDA was a “Latino Housing Organization” see them that way because they are a pillar within that community: “I don’t think that has always been the case but as that population has continued to grow and has been such an understandable focus also, I think it has become probably conceived or perceived that way, look at their staff, people identify with their staff.”

No

“No, I see an emphasis on Latino’s because of the area they work in and they do a good job of serving the Latino population, but I see them more as a neighborhood based development organization.”

“Not necessarily, I see them as just a service provider for anyone who has need of their services. Now, I think what’s happened is, just by virtue of location, and by their ability to connect with the Latino population because they have the bilingual capabilities, I think that has been a tremendous boost to the organization in helping identify themselves as kind of a place for the Latino population to get what they need but I don’t see them necessarily as that being the only population they serve.”

“I consider NeDA a diverse housing organization with a focus in serving Latinos; I consider them diverse, meaning that they serve any race coming through the door. For example if they have a Somali individual that comes in and he doesn’t dominate English I believe that NeDA will find a lead to send him to the right place, the same thing they would do for a Hmong person who doesn’t speak English or anybody else that doesn’t dominate English or Spanish because their languages are English and Spanish and that is the way that I see them.”

“In terms of NeDA, I do not see them right now as a Latino Housing Organization. I see they have a focus towards the Latino community but if they want to be a Latino Housing Organization (and there is a need for this, they are the only ones) they need to be more Latino oriented in their marketing and in their presence in the community. They need to shift and expand their presence to become more well known on a regional level as a Latino Housing Organization that serves Latinos throughout greater Minnesota and not just Latino’s from a certain area. They can do this through trying to branch out, connect, and partner with other organizations as well as use major pipelines such as the Archdiocese and the other four Diocese to penetrate different areas. Because there are real housing needs and advocating needs for the housing rights of Latinos in parts of greater Minnesota.”

NeDA’s Role According to Community Members

“I think NeDA is a very highly thought of organization, I think that, if I look back at how they started I never would have imagined them being where they are today. Because primarily they started as a need for fixing up boarded and vacant homes on the West Side, and turning those around in order to strengthen the community. So it really started as a development organization and as they got into that, they noticed that was just one piece of the puzzle, and if they were going to complete the continuum for people who are trying to purchase homes, especially the low to moderate income persons, they needed to have some more services, and so then the education came in and all the other services that they have brought into the mix over the years, and its just kind of blossomed.”

One interviewee referred to NeDA as: “Being that true trusted non-profit in the true sense of the word.” In addition to being a leader and a role model for other organizations in the realm of homebuyers’ education and financial literacy, she believes NeDA needs to work

at being a leader in the political arena as well, as someone who is “within the trenches and knows what is going on” someone who can make political leaders aware of community needs: “I see the next step as getting people to do research on a regional level to take inventory, mapping the living conditions of the Latinos in each region. This way it can become policy, by making it a real regional problem and not just a community issue.”

Overall, there are three tangible categories community members feel NeDA needs to consider as a part of their strategic planning for the future including: hiring more personnel, expanding geographically, and thinking about having a civic engagement component to the education they provide.

Hiring More Personnel

One of the things I heard from almost everyone I interviewed with was the fact that NeDA is understaffed to serve the current need: “My guess is that they are seeing a lot of customers now, especially with the problems of predatory lending and foreclosure that the staff cannot get to all of the calls that come in, or spend the time they would like to with the customers.” In terms of the education and counseling NeDA offers, people feel that they need more personnel: “More capable and talented people like the current staff and people who can serve the areas outside of the cities.” Past clientele feel that NeDA has the desire and the capabilities to serve the current and growing need but not sufficient personnel to do so. People complained of having to wait more than a month for an appointment. They also mentioned never being able to get through to NeDA staff on the phone lines: “They never answer!!! They need more people because it is impossible to reach NeDA, maybe they could have someone who answers the phones and can answer basic questions and give out basic information so that the time spent with the counselor is not wasted.” The lack of an adequate phone system was also mentioned by several of the people I interviewed with. Past NeDA clientele also said they would be interested in a second, follow through financial literacy class saying: “The financial literacy class is helpful but it gets you in the door and leaves you there. A second financial literacy class would be good. It could be called ‘Pase Dos’ and go over everything in the first class on another level, financial planning focused towards the future now that we have gotten started.” People talked about wanting help with how to send their children to college, how to get scholarships and student loans, and in general wanted to stay updated on what goes on with the IRS. They also mentioned that for people who work day jobs from eight to five it is difficult to see a counselor for one to one counseling. Whereas the classes and workshops are offered during the night and on weekends, one to one counseling can only be done during workday hours: “Perhaps with more clientele NeDA could have more flexibility with their hours.”

Expanding Geographically

Another element I heard repeatedly from the people I interviewed is the need to expand geographically. Although NeDA offers counseling services throughout the Twin Cities metro area, their presence is still on the West Side: “I would say actual physical

expansion would be needed, I know that NeDA does a fantastic job here on the West Side, I would say a presence is needed in Minneapolis, but if you wanted to just stay on this side of the river, NeDA could be doing so much more in Dakota County, Washington County, where the Latino population is actually growing as well, there are parts of Eagan and Apple Valley where entire neighborhoods are now Latino communities, so just geographically NeDA could expand into those areas.”

“If NeDA were to ask what our opinion was about an expansion in housing development services or support services of people getting into housing our advice would be that there is a need for those services city wide and that NeDA should move in that direction. I would also encourage NeDA to expand not only in the Twin Cities but also in greater Minnesota.”

Having a Civic Engagement Component

Finally, people suggested that NeDA could have a civic engagement component that would serve to give people a voice in their community: “Maybe NeDA should focus more on “What comes with being a homeowner?” Anytime people are empowered, there is a civic engagement component that has to do with participation and opening avenues that will allow them to influence what goes on in their community: “People get a new home, NeDA comes and says here is your voting registration card for your new address, here is how you can take ownership in your new community.” In welcoming someone into the neighborhood after they have bought a home, NeDA could provide something that would show what resources are available in terms of social groups, activities, services, modes of transportation and other information that would facilitate the newcomers mobility within his or her new community.

Appendices

Interview Questions:

1. What services do you provide to the Latino population?
2. Have you noticed any trends or changes in regards to the Latino community in Minnesota (Geographically/demographically)?
3. What do the people who come to you need? Have you noticed other predominant needs apart from the mainstream services you provide?
4. Have you had to modify your services in response to changes in the need of the people you serve?
5. What do you see as the need in terms of housing and/or economic development/financial literacy (both now and into the future)?
6. What are you doing to reach the community you serve?
7. In your opinion, what is the best way (what media works best) to reach the Latino community?
8. Do you consider NeDA a Latino housing organization?
9. What other services do you believe an organization like NeDA should provide in order to better meet the need? What do you see as NeDA's role in the community?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Focus Group Questions:

1. Did you have a positive experience at NeDA?
2. How long did you have to wait for an appointment?
3. Did NeDA provide you with the services you were looking for?
4. Was the information clear and understandable?
5. Was NeDA able to assist in resolving the issue?
6. What other services do you believe NeDA should provide?
7. Do you consider NeDA a "Latino Housing Organization"?
8. How did you hear about our services?
9. What should we be doing to better spread the word about who we are?
10. How can we better serve you?

Figure 1: Population Projections

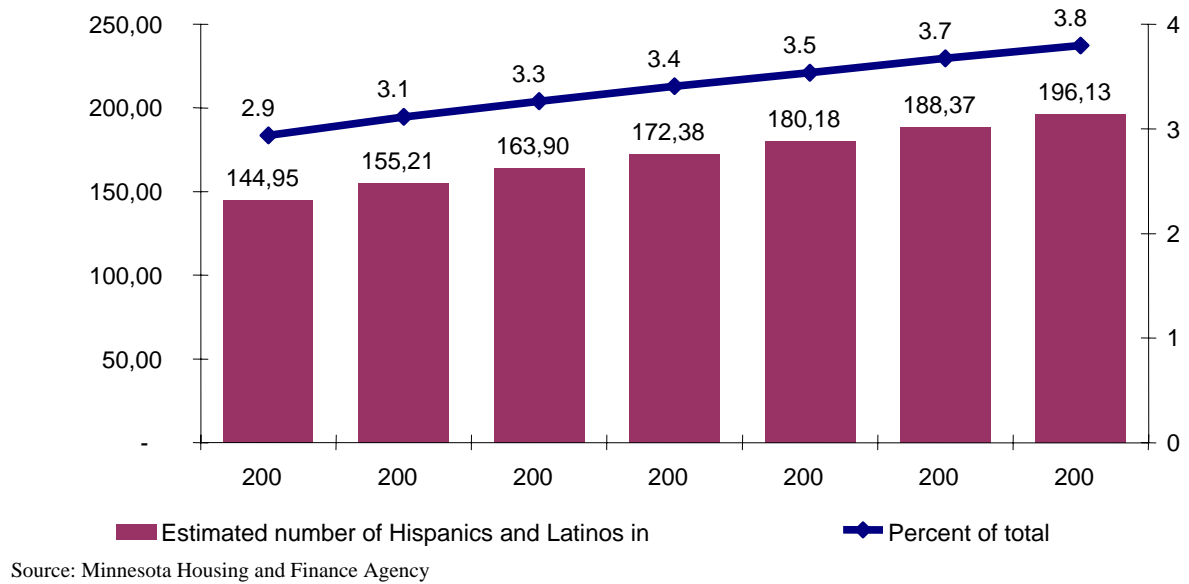
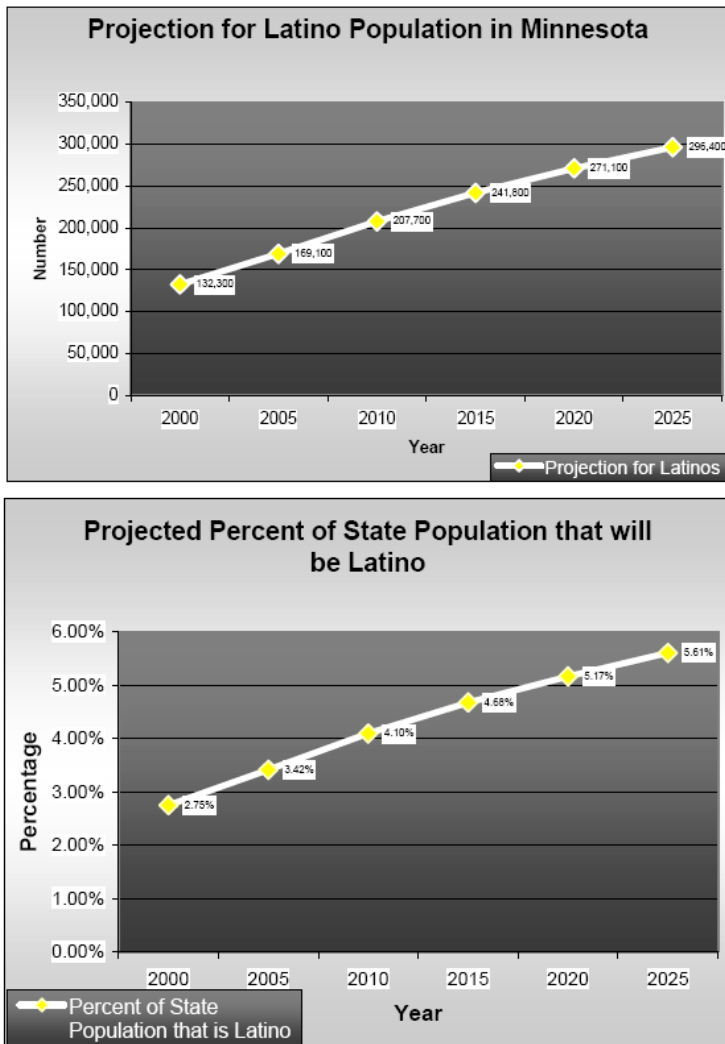
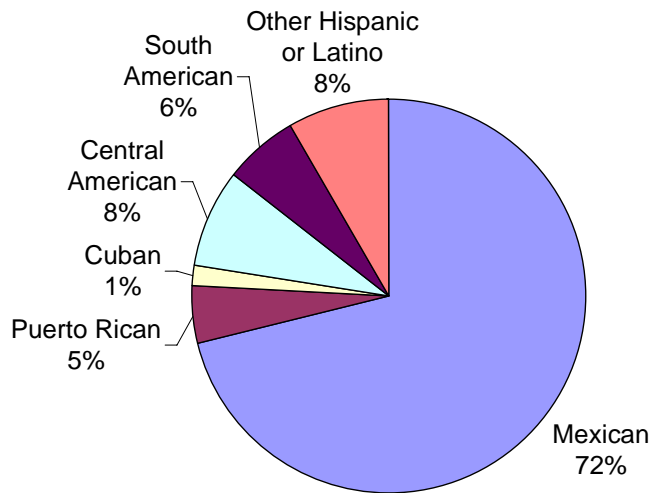


Figure 2: Long-term Projections



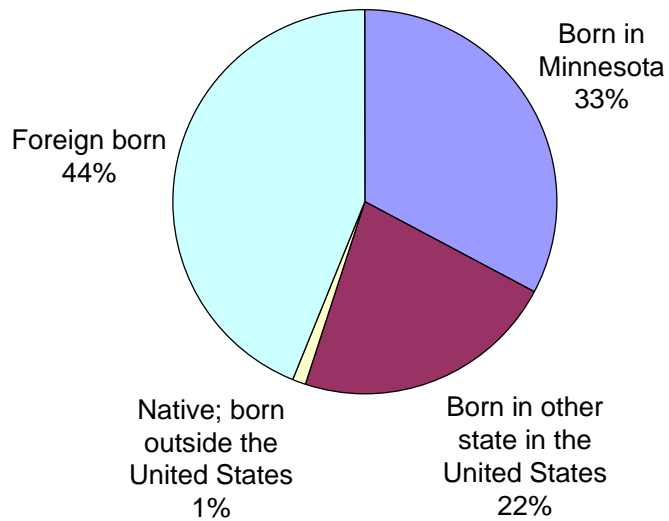
Source: Chicano Latino Affairs Council based on 2000 Census Data

Figure 3: Origins of Latino Population in Minnesota



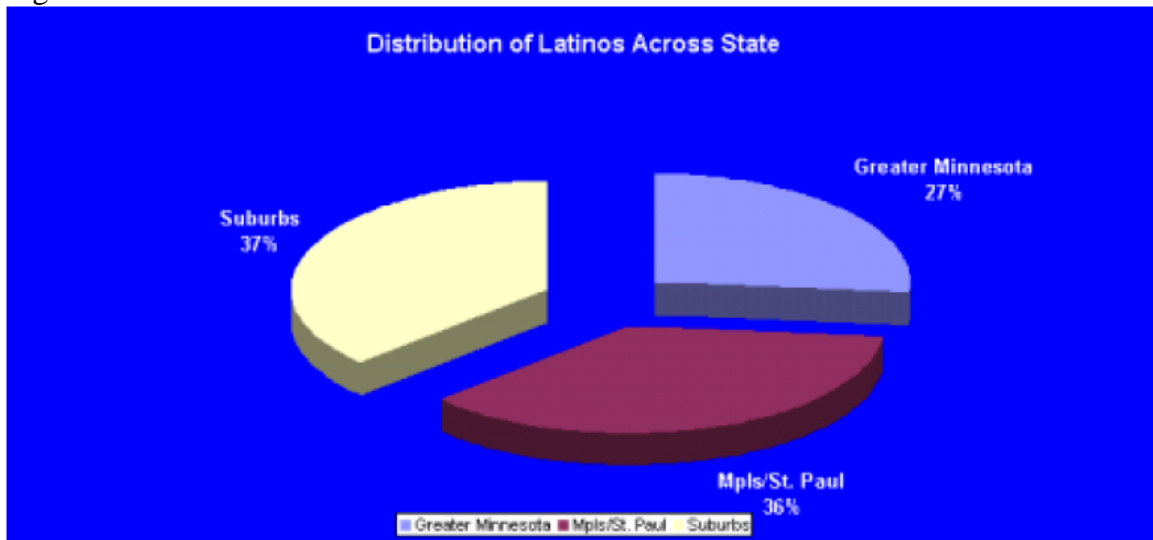
Source: MHFA, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005

Figure 4: Percent of Latinos born in Minnesota



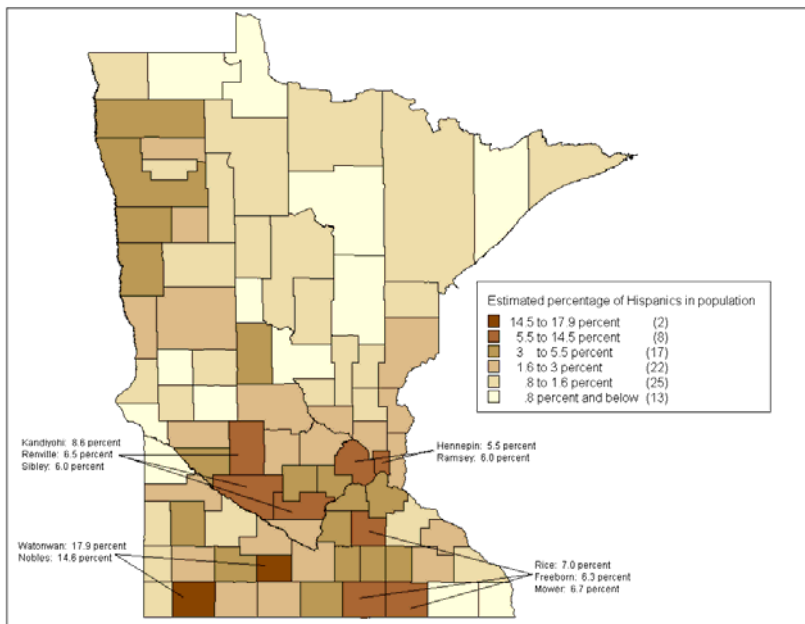
Source: MHFA, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005

Figure 5: Distribution of Latinos across Minnesota



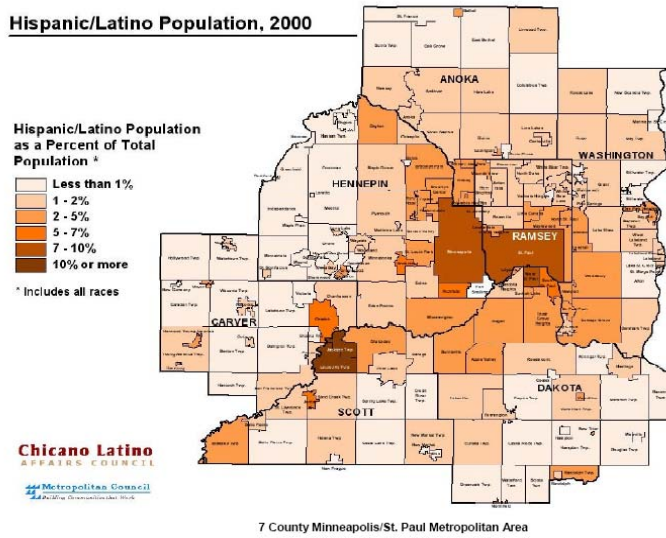
Source: Chicano Latino Affairs Council, U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Figure 6: Distribution by County across Minnesota



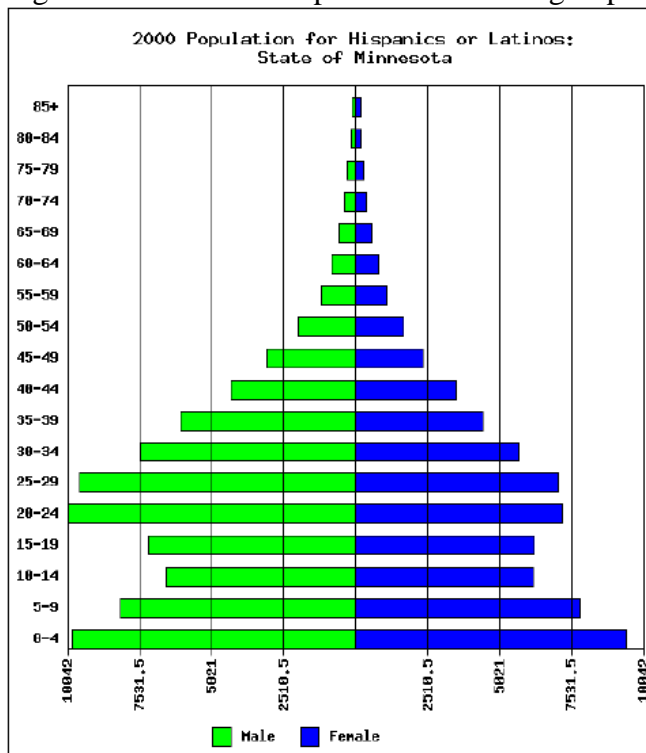
Source: MHFA, U.S. Census Bureau, County Population Estimates, 2005

Figure 7: Concentrations in Twin Cities seven county metro area



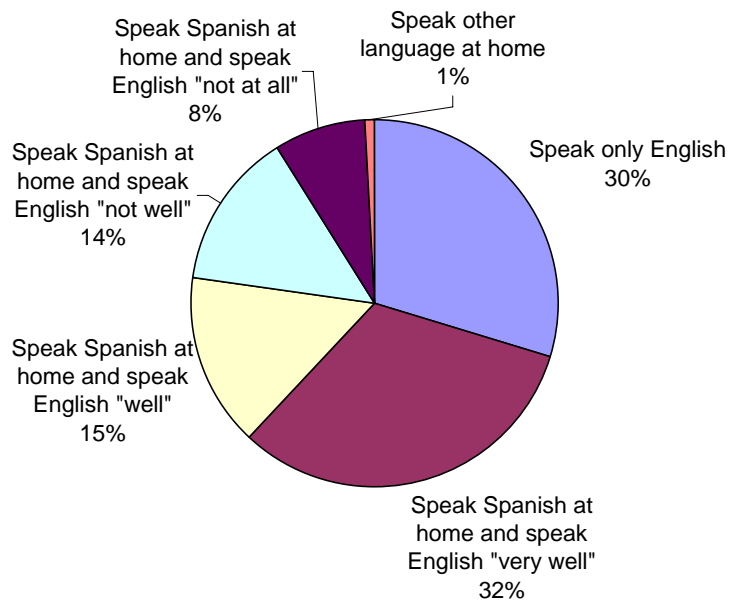
Source: Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency

Figure 8: The Latino Population is a Young Population



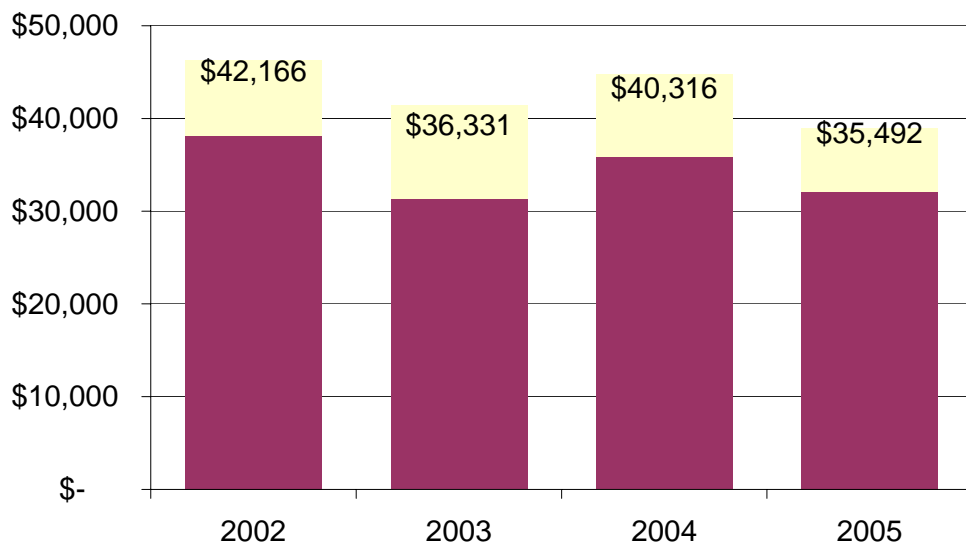
Source: Chicano Latino Affairs Council based on 2000 Census

Figure 9: Language Proficiency



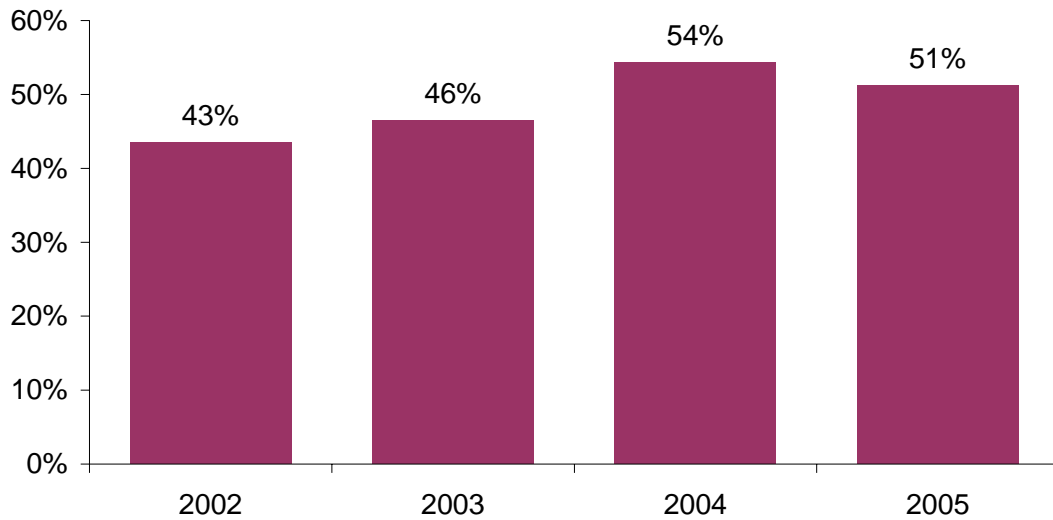
Source: Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency

Figure 10: Median Household Incomes



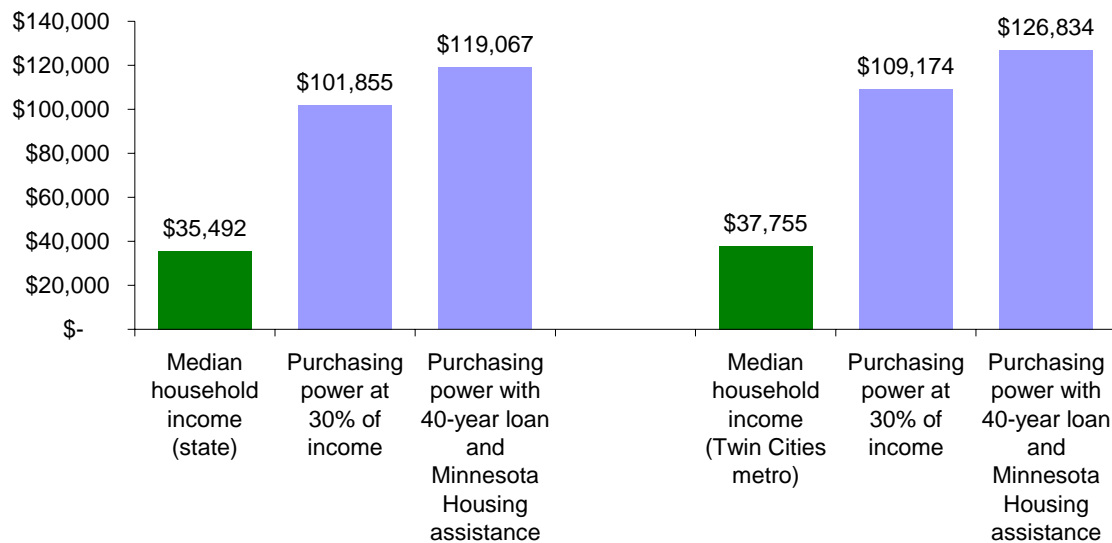
Source: Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency

Figure 11: Homeownership Rates



Source: Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency

Figure 12: Purchasing Power at Median Income



Assumes an interest rate of 6.625 percent, 3 percent downpayment (including any downpayment assistance), a housing-loan-to-income-ratio of 30 percent, property taxes at 1.25 percent of home sales price, mortgage insurance at 0.59 percent of loan, and hazard insurance at \$100 per month.

Source: Minnesota Housing and Finance Agency

